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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 7119
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2707
RUEHKF/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 8761
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4674
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 3351
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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Monday, 28 January 2008, 09:30
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 000405
SIPDIS
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TAGS PREL, PGOV, PTER, PK

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONDOLENCE CALL ON ASIF ZARDARI

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

1, (C) Summary. During an hour and a half conversation with Ambassador on January 25, Pakistan People's Party Co-Chairman Asif Zardari called f
12. (C) Ambassador and Polcouns January 25 paid a condolence and introductory call on Asif Ali Zardari, widower of Benazir Bhutto and Co-Chairn
13. (C) Ambassador expressed condolences over the death of Benazir Bhutto and recounted how she had first met Bhutto just a few months ago in t
14. (C) Zardari opened his remarks by saying that the U.S. is "our safety blanket" and recounted how Benazir had returned despite the threats a
Taliban Threat

15. (C) The challenge today, said Zardari, was to convert Benazir's energy and the sympathy from her death into a positive outcome for Pakistar
16. (C) According to Zardari, there was no such thing as a "moderate Taliban" which had warped the concept of Islam. Zardari expressed concern
Planning to Run

17. (C) Zardari agreed, saying that democracy was the way

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forward. He had opposed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's announcement (twice) of a boycott and had not launched a FIR (first incident repor
18. (C) Ambassador responded that the U.S. most definitely is supporting the democratic process in Pakistan and believes that, as the broadest
Call in the Army

19. (C) In response, Zardari ticked off the litany of PPP complaints about the election process: the intelligence agencies were going to rig th

110. (C) What was needed, Zardari believed, was to have the Pakistan Army deployed at all voting places on election day to supervise the proces

111. (C) Noting that many western officials would see deployment of the Army as a negative development, Ambassador pressed Zardari on this poir
Bhutto Investigation

112. (C) Zardari confirmed that PPP officials were in the U.S. to push for a UN investigation of Benazir Bhutto's assassination. He was not int

113. (C) Ambassador noted that our experience with the Hariri investigation was not promising; after three and a half years and great expense,
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law enforcement officials and prosecutors to actually conduct the investigation. We believed it was important to hear the results of the Scotls
Post-Election Alliances

114. (C) In response to Ambassador's question, Zardari said he could work with the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) as "they were not all bad." He

115. (C) As for other party politicians, Zardari described Nawaz Sharif as a shy man. He had welcomed Nawaz's condolence visit to Sindh, althou
Economic Policy

116. (C) Zardari lamented that, despite economic growth, Musharraf had wasted an opportunity to improve social conditions in Pakistan. The cour

117. (C) Ambassador said that we shared the same concern. In particular, funds we provided for the military were not reaching the forces who ne
Request for Endorsement

118. (C) In closing, Zardari said flatly "I am not Benazir, and I know it. The people respect me only because I spent eleven years in prison."
Comment

119. (C) Zardari had prepared for this meeting and knew what his audience wanted to hear. Nevertheless, he was calm, articulate and demonstrate
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will (it has not been shared with the public despite numerous media requests), Zardari appeared to be trying to convince us that Benazir indeed

120. (C) Zardari seemingly wants to be the PPP's candidate for Prime Minister, with the USG blessing. Law is not necessarily an obstacle to pol

121. Within PPP party circles, there is still a great deal of suspicion and dislike of Zardari. For now, most PPP members are lining up behind

122. (C) The government already has announced that the Army will be stationed at "sensitive" polling places to maintain law and order on electi
PATTERSON